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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Sir John Compton, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia

The President: Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, His Excellency Sir John Compton, who passed away on Friday, 7 September 2007.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Saint Lucia to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Saint Lucia and to the bereaved family of His Excellency Sir John Compton.

May I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Sir John Compton.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Philippines, who will speak on behalf of the Asian States.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): We mourn today the loss of a great leader in John George Melvin Compton, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, which has left a pall not only over the Government of Saint Lucia but also over the people to whom he has dedicated his life-long work and service.

Governing Saint Lucia for more than a quarter of a century, Sir John Compton's political life was an epitome of dedication, commitment and loyalty to his country and people, of patience and persistence over tribulation and of triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds and challenges. His policies and vision led Saint Lucia into a new age of development. Resisting colonialism, denouncing social stratification, fighting for the interests of the working class and developing a strong market economy are the hallmarks of Sir John's leadership.

His larger-than-life presence was felt not only within Saint Lucia but beyond its shores as well. He was one of the driving forces of Caribbean integration and initiated the Eastern Caribbean Common Market, the forerunner to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. Truly, he has left on imprint on more than the sands of Saint Lucia, one which cannot be washed away by the tides.

But as we mourn Sir John's passing, we also pay tribute to the Government and people of Saint Lucia for steadfastly and resolutely holding on to the gains and legacy of Sir John's leadership. On behalf of the Asian Group, I express my sincerest condolences to the Government and people of Saint Lucia and wish them solace in their sorrow and hope in Sir John's new life in the beyond. Truly he has achieved immortality.

The President: I call now on the representative of Montenegro, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Mr. Kaludjerović (Montenegro): On behalf of the Eastern European Group, I have the sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of an exceptional person who passed away on 7 September 2007 — Sir John Compton, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

Sir John, a distinguished leader of Saint Lucia for more than forty years, cleverly and prudently changed the political, economic and social milieu of his country in a number of ways. Sir John was dedicated to the advancement of the standard of life of his compatriots and was a man of great energy for and devotion to his own country. He fought to achieve independence for his country and succeeded in 1979, after which St. Lucia became the member of the United Nations.

But Sir John, being the founding father of his nation, was also a man ready to fully accept the rules of democracy. He left his Premier's post after losing elections, and afterwards returned to the premiership several times. His last term began at the age of 80, in 2006, when he won the elections and became Prime Minister for the fifth time.

He was a vocal advocate of Caribbean unity. His role in the creation of the regional common market, which is now the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States was of the utmost importance. Sir John also greatly helped in the establishment of the Caribbean Development Bank, the West Indies Associated States Council of Ministers and the Eastern Caribbean Common Market. All this makes us know and honour him for his commitment to multilateralism, and in particular to regional cooperation and integration.

Sir John Compton will be remembered for his wisdom and dedicated service to his country and the Caribbean region and as one of the most notable leaders of the contemporary world. His death has profoundly distressed us all, and on behalf of the Eastern European Group, I would like to express our sorrow to the Government and the people of Saint Lucia and to his family, friends and colleagues.

The President: I call next on the representative of Paraguay, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group as we pay a posthumous tribute to The Honourable John Compton, who was Prime Minister of Saint Lucia for several terms.

Sir John Compton, whose career took him beyond the borders of Saint Lucia, began his public life in 1953, joining the Labour Party upon returning to the country after having studied economics at the prestigious London School of Economics. His talent and his adherence to his ideals in support of those most in need enabled him to become a very important political figure not only in Saint Lucia, but also throughout the Caribbean region.

Sir John Compton, who was Saint Lucia's first Prime Minister after it had gained its independence in 1979, will rightly be remembered for his role as father of the nation and for his efforts in leading his country towards modernity through the adoption and implementation of economic and social reforms.

Sir John Compton was an outstanding political figure in the Caribbean and will also be recognized for having been a leader and promoter of the regional integration process leading to the establishment of the Caribbean Community and its institutions. His death is a loss not only for Saint Lucia and the Caribbean as a whole, but for all of us who constitute that regional group.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States joins in the expressions of condolence to the people and the Government of this fraternal Caribbean country.

The President: I now call on the representative of Switzerland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour and the sad duty to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States to pay tribute to the late Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, His Excellency Sir John Compton, who died on 7 September.

Saint Lucia mourns the passing not only of its Prime Minister, but of its founding father. Sir John Compton studied law in the United Kingdom, became an attorney and soon launched a political career leading him to a position of the highest responsibility. He led his country five times — first beginning in 1964, under British administration, and then starting in 1979 as Prime Minister of an independent State. Saint Lucia owes its existence and its development to him.

Over more than five decades, he contributed to the development of his country's infrastructure, propelling it into modernity. Throughout his life, he was an ardent advocate of Caribbean regional integration.

Permit me, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, to express my sincere condolences to the authorities and the people of Saint Lucia. At this difficult time for them, our thoughts are particularly with the family and loved ones of the late Prime Minister.

The President: I now call on the representative of the United States of America, as host country.

Mr. Wallace (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I would like to express our deepest condolences on the death of Saint Lucia's Prime Minister, Sir John Compton.

Sir John led his Caribbean island nation into independence in the 1970s. Both in and out of public office, he contributed greatly to the development of his country and of the Caribbean region. The nickname bestowed on him by his fellow Saint Lucians, "Daddy Compton", demonstrates his popularity and the affection with which he is regarded.

We honour the passing of Sir John and offer our condolences to his family and his countrymen.

The President: I now call on the representative of Saint Lucia.

Ms. Joseph (Saint Lucia): I wish to express to you, Madam President, the warm appreciation of the Government and the people of Saint Lucia for this opportunity to pay tribute to our late Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Sir John George Melvin Compton, who passed away on 7 September 2007. I also wish to thank the representatives of Member States who have spoken so eloquently today with words of condolence, as well as encouragement, at this most difficult time as the people of Saint Lucia mourn the passing of their Prime Minister. Saint Lucia is heartened by the many expressions of condolence and support that have been received from the international community on the passing of Sir John George Melvin Compton.

Sir John Compton was one of the most formidable political leaders in the Caribbean and a towering figure in the political evolution of Saint Lucia. After graduating from Saint Mary's College in Saint Lucia, he left for Curação to work in an oil refinery, as many Saint Lucians of the period did. He later emigrated to the United Kingdom in the 1940s to pursue higher education, completing his studies in law and economics at the University of Wales and the London School of Economics. He was called to the bar in 1951.

Sir John Compton returned to Saint Lucia that same year, joining the emerging struggle against colonialism in the Caribbean, where the process of self-determination was evolving in earnest. By 1954, he had won his first seat in the Legislative Council, as an independent candidate, representing the sugar-producing constituency of Micoud-Dennery, and was appointed to the Executive Council. In 1956, he joined the country's first mass political party, the Saint Lucia Labour Party, serving as its deputy leader, and intensified his involvement as a union activist.

In 1957, Sir John Compton personally confronted the sugar plantocracy on behalf of the workers, who had been refused the right of union representation. Following weeks of intense labour strife, which had also spread to the banana industry, the factories finally came to the negotiating table, and the rights of the union to collective representation were finally recognized. He was subsequently appointed Minister for Trade and Production.

By 1964, Sir John Compton had become the second Chief Minister of Saint Lucia as head of the newly formed United Workers Party, and in 1967 he became the first Premier of Saint Lucia when the country moved from colonial status to free associated statehood with Britain. At independence, in 1979, Sir John Compton became the first Prime Minister of our country. Elections that year resulted in a brief change of government, and he returned to power in 1982, again serving as Prime Minister until 1996, when he demitted office voluntarily with the intention of retiring from active politics. Ten years later, he was back, achieving an impressive victory at the polls and assuming once again the mantle of leadership as Prime Minister of the country. Prime Minister Compton presided over the economic and social transformation of Saint Lucia for a period of more than three decades, laying the basis for the country's long-term development.

Throughout his tenure, Prime Minister Compton was a strong advocate for Caribbean integration and

was very active in the affairs of the Caribbean Community. He also played a seminal role in the establishment of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States as a mechanism for integration for most of the smaller island countries of the Eastern Caribbean following their independence.

Sir John Compton had a strong commitment to the development of the people of Saint Lucia and of the Caribbean region. He was always as comfortable with the ordinary St. Lucian, the so-called man on the street, as he was with leaders of international stature or with royalty. It was not uncommon that, on the one hand, he would participate in a vigorous debate in Parliament or hold discussions with visiting heads of Government, and then on the other, quickly jump into his well-worn truck and drive himself to his farm in the interior of the country to tend to his bananas, no different from any ordinary farmer.

Perhaps it is that humility and his recognition of the broader picture that are the true legacy of Sir John George Melvin Compton. To that end, his favourite poem, *If*, by Rudyard Kipling, sheds considerable light, in its last verse, on the nature and character of the man:

> "If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, Or walk with kings — nor lose the common touch,
>
> If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
>
> If all men count with you, but none too much,
>
> If you can fill the unforgiving minute
>
> With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
>
> Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
>
> And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son!"

Indeed, Saint Lucia has lost a most honourable son and the Caribbean Community has lost one of its esteemed heads of Government. The legacy left by the Right Honourable Sir John George Melvin Compton will serve as a guiding light for future generations of leaders of our country and of our region.

The President: I call on the representative of Zimbabwe, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): On behalf of the African Group, I would like to express our deep condolences to the people and Government of Saint Lucia on the passing away of Sir John Compton, the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

Sir John Compton, an outstanding and long-serving statesman who led his country for more than four decades, was an icon in Saint Lucia and the Caribbean region. He had a strong commitment to the development of the people of Saint Lucia and the Caribbean Community. The Africa Group would like to join the Government and the people of Saint Lucia and the family of Sir John Compton in their moment of grief. It is on that note that I wish his soul to rest in eternal peace.

Agenda item 111 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/61/47)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.69/Rev.1).

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111 at its 72nd to 75th plenary meetings on 11 and 12 December 2006.

Under this agenda item, the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council is contained in document A/61/47, which has been distributed this morning in the Hall.

I would like to draw the attention of Member States the mistake contained in sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 21 of the report. It has also been brought to my attention that, in the French text, the changes in sub-paragraphs (c) and (d) of paragraph 21 were inadvertently omitted. The two sub-paragraphs should read as follows:

> "(c) Urges the Working Group to exert efforts during the sixty-second session, aimed at achieving general agreement among Member States in the consideration of all issues relevant to the question of equitable representation on and

increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council;

"(d) Decides that the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council should be considered during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly so that further concrete results may be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations, building on the progress achieved so far, particularly at the sixty-third session, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States."

All these corrections will be reflected in the final version of the draft decision on the Working Group's report.

In connection with the item, the Assembly has before it a draft decision contained in paragraph 21 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group, as orally corrected. The Assembly also has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/61/L.69/Rev.1.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft decision contained in paragraph 21 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group, as orally corrected. Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision contained in paragraph 21 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision, as orally corrected?

The draft decision, as orally corrected, was adopted.

The President: I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for your leadership on this very important and fundamental reform of the United Nations. The manner in which you guided our work on this issue and in which you were available to consult with all of us throughout is deeply appreciated, not only by myself but, I would say, by all the delegations in this Hall.

We also wish to pay tribute to your facilitators, who were among the best of us who serve at the United Nations. We thank them for their patience, their availability to us and the work that they have put before us.

I will join the consensus today, but without any enthusiasm. Indeed, we have come a long way with draft decision on equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. South Africa and 27 other countries wanted a results-oriented element, based on governmental negotiations, to be reflected in the draft decision. However, we are satisfied that the draft decision takes into account some of our concerns by referring to the achievement of further concrete steps as we continue this important and fundamental reform of the United Nations.

We are also satisfied that the proposals made by Member States will be considered, because these proposals are inevitably based on important elements that need to be discussed. We are satisfied too that, in spite of resistance by many, we have now agreed that we would have intergovernmental negotiations, just as we do on many other issues in this body.

Under the aforementioned circumstances, namely the progress that we have made, I wish to inform the Assembly that we, the sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1, will not pursue the matter at this stage.

I must also say that South Africa and others are proud that a number of small States from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific stood firm and tall in spite of the unprecedented pressures we all faced, including the kind of dismissive language that is seldom heard in intergovernmental negotiations. Those delegations, some of which were becoming sponsors even this morning, stood firm because we believe that this issue of the reform of the Security Council is important. We are committed to pursuing it during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, until all Member States agree that it is the best way to go forward.

Once again, allow me to thank you, Madam President, on behalf of many of the delegations that sponsored draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1, for all the

work you have done. We know that this is the last day that we will see you on the podium. We wish you all the best and we want you to know, as you leave this place, that you have really moved this issue forward. We are determined to move it even further forward in the coming session.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my deep appreciation to you, Madam President, for the leadership you demonstrated throughout the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in raising the momentum for Security Council reform. The efforts to move forward made by the five facilitators and two ambassadors under your guidance were also greatly appreciated. We would like to commend you particularly on your tireless efforts, which made it possible to adopt the report of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council (A/61/47) by consensus. Without your commitment, that could not have happened.

We witnessed heightened interest in Security Council reform during last week's consideration of the matter by the Open-Ended Working Group. In the course of that process, the momentum towards the early realization of such reform has been further strengthened, which augurs well for the next session of the General Assembly.

The issue of Security Council reform has been discussed over the years in the General Assembly. We believe that there is now broad agreement to move to the next stage of consideration, namely intergovernmental negotiations. It has now been decided that the Open-Ended Working Group will continue its work, and that the question of Security Council reform will be considered again at the next session. Japan sincerely hopes that concrete results will be achieved during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly through intergovernmental negotiations.

Japan continues to maintain its basic position on Security Council reform, which includes the expansion of both categories of membership, so as to make the Council more representative, effective and transparent, with enhanced effectiveness and legitimacy.

With that in mind, our delegation is ready to engage actively and constructively in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations in a flexible manner, with a view to producing concrete results during the next session of the General Assembly. I would like to call upon other delegations to participate in the negotiations in the same spirit, so that we may accomplish jointly this challenging task of making the Security Council more effective.

It was a real joy to work with you, Madam President. Your commitment and dedication to advancing the process and seeking a consensus were indeed gratifying. I wish you well in your next endeavours.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Brazil welcomes the adoption of the decision on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. We are glad that the decision, adopted by consensus by the Assembly, recognizes that the next stage of our consideration of this important issue will be a process of results-oriented intergovernmental negotiations, building on proposals made by Member States that contemplate an expansion in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members. This was long overdue.

Brazil expects that this process will enable us to complete the reform of the Security Council during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We will engage actively and constructively with all interested countries in this urgent endeavour. We invite all delegations to approach the forthcoming negotiations in the same spirit, in order to achieve our common goal.

Allow me to take this opportunity, Madam President, to express our appreciation for your tireless efforts in maintaining momentum on this important issue and in ensuring that we move into the next stage in our deliberations. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. Sen (India): We join other delegations in recording our appreciation for the work you did, Madam President, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly and, on this last day of that session, wish you with all our hearts good fortune in your future undertakings.

We joined the consensus on the adoption of the draft decision on the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council, including

the clarifications provided from the podium on including in the French version the amendments we agreed on Friday evening and the correcting of the typographical error of the words "concrete steps" to read "concrete results". Our approach and that of those who shared it was consistently reasonable, constructive and democratic, based on reflecting the real wishes of most members.

It is therefore a matter of satisfaction that the report we adopted on Friday evening finally incorporated the concepts of achieving results and holding intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of positions and proposals of Member States. We therefore joined the consensus.

For our part, we are happy not simply on account of the substance of what we struggled for, but because the struggle made us part of a group of countries with so many qualities of head and heart — part of so much dignity and courage. They strongly felt that there were wrongs to be righted and rights to be defended. The dignity and courage was in the face of rumour, innuendo and intimidation. We heard last week the force, eloquence and passion of the ringing sincerity that is the soul of true eloquence and gives wings of fire to words. We saw the shifting lights of the eloquent sentences.

Let me also compliment the interpreters, whose work is so seldom recognized. The English interpretation of, for instance, a couple of statements in French made last week by the representatives of two small island developing States did justice to the power and momentum of the original.

This is the most important portent for the future. Things will not be the same hereafter, because the voices of the developing, the small and those thought to be marginalized will continue to resonate, will not be stilled and will continue to disturb the comfortable sleep of the status quo-ists. That is the real point: there are two visions of the United Nations. One is that the United Nations should in fact — and not in comfortable fiction — in real action — and not in mere comforting words — respond to their concerns. The other vision is the cynical one of business as usual and meaningless ritual, where the General Assembly can feel the mildew coming over it and its bones turn to paste — a vision that is so useful for the powerful. Those who tell the developing, the least developed and the small that they need not be consulted strike at the heart of the democratic principle that decision-making by the many, even if some of us may be relatively inexperienced, is better than decisions made by a narrow group of the experienced and the cynical few.

Our only regret therefore is that it took the struggle of so many developing, least developed and small island developing States to make the report reflect their major concepts and that the discussion was artificially cut short in the natural process of doing so. It is not just a question of arithmetic, but one of politics; it is not just once again attempting to ignore a significant number of countries, but continuing the tradition of the marginalized only talking in words but their voices not being listened to in practice. It is the hope of that status quo-ists that they only have to sit tight and the world will remain the same. But it has changed, and will change more.

One of our colleagues said that he would quote Sheikh Jalal Al-Din Al-Roumi on Friday, but he did not do so. Let me therefore cite him. Roumi said that the mirror cannot go back to again being iron, or the bread to again being wheat. The voices of which I speak, and which the General Assembly heard last week, are familiar throughout the history of being told this by the powerful: instead of struggling for what is conducive to the common good, and what is therefore to your liking, learn to like what is imposed on you. They have demonstrated unmistakably and successfully that they are not prepared to do this anymore.

I have no wish, on this occasion, for sterile polemics with the votaries of intimidation. But I would like, in conclusion, in a lighter vein, give them not the biblical but the Shavian advice: do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you, because their tests may be different.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first, by way of introduction, to recall that the corrections read out by the President have not been included in the French version of the text (A/61/47) that has recently been distributed. Paragraph 21 (c) of the text to which we agreed clearly spells out the goal of continuing efforts to reach "general agreement". Paragraph 21 (d) also includes a goal, namely, that "concrete results" be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations.

Let me also, Madam President, commend you for the commitment and effectiveness that you have demonstrated in the course of your presidency. Security

Council reform, which is crucial to the future of the Organization, has been one of the difficult issues on which you have been able to make significant progress. Never has such thorough work been done on this issue as that reflected in the report before the Assembly today. We must build on that work and ensure that it leads to an energetic relaunching of efforts to ensure that the Security Council better takes into account the political and economic realities of the world, as well as to greater transparency in the Council's work. You were able to achieve that, Madam President.

We welcome the fact that the agreement opens the door to intergovernmental negotiations. We would certainly have wished that the General Assembly would have been more resolute in the decision to open such negotiations, but we should not downplay the progress that has been made. France attaches great importance to multilateralism, and specifically to the United Nations. Under the Charter, the Security Council has the weighty task of addressing global peace and security. It is therefore essential that this decision be clearly understood, and that it be implemented without conditions.

In order to further strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness, we favour an expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership — with Germany, Japan, India and Brazil as new permanent members and with fair representation for Africa. We believe that we must negotiate in good faith on this issue. I would like to reaffirm today that France is prepared to take part in such negotiations at any time and in an open and exacting spirit, and with a resolute desire to attain results.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on the consensus adoption of the report (A/61/47) and of the recommendations that you have presented on the issue of the reform of the Security Council. Over the past year, you have led an open process of consultations and negotiations, with a view to reaching general agreement on Security Council reform. You have performed your task with energy, zeal and honesty.

That process of open consultations commenced, if memory serves me correctly, on 20 September 2006, at a dinner hosted by the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of Italy, to which all Member States were invited and where we offered to open such a process of consultations and negotiations.

The report of the five facilitators issued on 19 April added to the process a new and positive dynamic that we had not witnessed in previous years. In that report, the notions on the way forward concluded that the interim approach was the only feasible approach. The report suggested four options for the intermediate category, which included extended seats and other options that provided for re-election and rotation. The report further noted that the General Assembly should opt for a Security Council reform formula that could garner the widest possible political acceptance by the membership — and, in any case, well above the required majority in the General Assembly. The report of the five facilitators and the subsequent complementary report of the two ambassadors were widely welcomed in the Assembly as significant achievements.

Madam President, we fully agree with the content of your letter of 10 September that we must "preserve and build on the positive momentum and spirit created in the sixty-first session". The adoption of the report and its recommendations were disturbed this year by the unilateral proposal advanced by some States in document A/61/L.69, seeking to prescribe their unilateral elements and unilateral modalities for the Security Council reform process. Fortunately, that unilateralist approach evoked weak support, and we are glad that it has not been pressed to a vote. But perhaps a lesson has been learned: the lesson that voting is not an option on this sensitive issue of Security Council reform.

Pakistan and the Uniting for Consensus group have always supported a negotiated outcome. Consensus can only be achieved through negotiations; consensus cannot be achieved through a vote. But negotiations must build on the work that has already been accomplished, and the foundation for consensus is the two reports which are annexed to document A/61/47, along with the recommendations that we have just adopted.

We are glad that the conclusions in paragraph 21 state quite clearly that the efforts at the sixty-second session are to be aimed at achieving general agreement — I repeat, "general agreement" — among Member States in the consideration of all — I repeat, "all" — issues relevant to Security Council reform. And the conclusion also states that further concrete results are to be achieved by building on the progress

made so far, particularly at the sixty-first session. That progress is reflected in the two reports.

We need to proceed to the next stage. We need to agree on evolving consensus on the basis of a negotiated outcome, which is reflected in the two reports annexed to the report of the Working Group.

Let me say in conclusion that over the course of history, there have been many occasions when the seekers of privilege have come to say that they do not wish to praise Caesar but to bury him. But their real design is to seek privilege and power for themselves.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): Madam President, I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to you for the leadership, courage and wisdom with which you have led us over 12 months to this result today. Much progress has been achieved. We have made important steps forward on the basis of the excellent work done by the facilitators. It was necessary to make sometimes painful compromises, but in the end, we followed your guidance, Madam President, in accepting what seemed to be the final possible compromise.

It is the essence of a compromise that nobody is 100 per cent satisfied. If that were the case, we all would have done a bad job. With the text adopted now, we open the door to the next stage. For us, it is important that we have consensus on this important step. That does not mean, however, that anybody has had to give up any position on the substance of the matter of reforms. We have found a consensus to move in the right direction, to move from the stage of consultations to the stage of intergovernmental negotiations, to come, in the end, to a Security Council reform that brings about a Council that is truly representative of the geopolitical realities of our age and whose legitimacy cannot be challenged by anyone.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Madam President, I would like to start by joining colleagues in paying tribute to you for your efforts on this important issue and for the leadership and guidance that you have shown us throughout all the deliberations. Our thanks go also to the facilitators.

I simply wanted to state that the United Kingdom's position on Security Council reform remains unchanged. We believe that it is important to expand the Security Council in both categories of membership. We believe that the Council should be made more representative, reflecting global realities. In doing so, we shall make it more effective. Our position is that Germany, India, Brazil and Japan should become permanent members and that there should be permanent representation for Africa. There are also a number of other claims that we heard a great deal about, and quite rightly, in the last few days of our deliberation, and they too will need important consideration.

We remain open to all options, including any that might break the deadlock. We look forward to being engaged in this important issue as we go forward.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): At this point, I do not want to repeat what other colleagues have already said. I just want to join them, Madam President, in expressing my warmest, most sincere, strongest appreciation for your leadership.

Leadership is shown in moments of difficulty, in delicate moments, in decisive moments, and you have shown leadership exactly when it was needed, throughout this past year, and especially in the last hours and the last days. In recent days, you have shown that you are a leader; you brought all of us into a consensus position.

Also, I would like to recall that, a year ago, at the event hosted on 20 September 2006 by President Musharraf and Prime Minister Prodi, an appeal for negotiations was launched and you, Madam President, were asked to lead and to deliver. You accepted at that time, and after one year, we have seen that you have led and you have delivered.

We are now entering a new phase, turning a page. Today is a day of success not for one group or another. It is a day of success for all of us. It is a day that offers a new challenge for all of us. Let us hope that we will live up to the expectations.

Thank you very much, Madam President. Good luck, and take care of yourself.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

With regard to draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1, members have heard the statement by the representative of South Africa. Therefore, no action is needed on the draft resolution.

I should now like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz of Chile, Ambassador Mirjana Mladineo of Croatia, Ambassador

Mavroyiannis of Cyprus, Ambassador Christian Wenaweser of Liechtenstein, Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands and Ambassador Ali Hachani of Tunisia, who conducted, on my behalf, the discussions and the complex negotiations of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. I am sure that all members of the Assembly join me in extending to them our sincere appreciation.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 111?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this item at its 95th plenary meeting, on 17 April 2007.

Under this item, informal consultations have been conducted on the follow-up of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment" (A/61/836). Informal consultations have also been conducted on the review of mandates.

As stated in my letters dated 15 September 2007 to Member States, no agreement has been reached on either of these two subjects. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly decides to continue consultations on system-wide coherence at its sixty-second session? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that the General Assembly decides to continue consultations on mandate review at its sixty-second session on how to move forward on this issue? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: I should now like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Christopher Hackett of Barbados and Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit of Luxembourg, who have so patiently conducted the discussions and negotiations on system-wide coherence. I should also like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Kaire Munionganda Mbuende of Namibia, Ambassador David Cooney of Ireland, Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, Ambassador Iftekhar Chowdhury of Bangladesh and Ambassador Claudia Blum of Colombia, who have patiently conducted the discussions and negotiations on mandate review.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 113?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 108 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Draft resolution (A/61/L.70)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 108 and its sub-items at its 38th and 39th plenary meetings, on 22 October 2006.

I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.70.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): On behalf of the African Group, I wish to start by commending you, Madam, for convening this important meeting. Since we are in the drawdown of your presidency, allow me also to express our deep appreciation for the strength, commitment, wisdom and excellent skill with which you have led the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

We are pleased to present to the General Assembly today the draft resolution on cooperation

between the United Nations and the African Union, which, as members know, is renewed by the Assembly every two years and which this year appears in document A/61/L.70.

During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, we witnessed intense reflection and consultations between the United Nations and the African Union on strengthening the cooperation between the two organizations, pursuant to the recommendation set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). We would like to thank all our partners for their active participation and support.

We are pleased that that process culminated in, among other things, the adoption in November 2006 of the ten-year capacity-building framework for the African Union, which highlights key areas for special emphasis in cooperation between the African Union and United Nations in the areas of capacity-building and social development, peace and security and governance. The draft resolution before members today reflects those key areas, among others, and has been endorsed by the African Group. We therefore call for the support of all members of the General Assembly in order to consolidate and strengthen those efforts.

For our part, we would like to reaffirm the commitment and determination of our Governments and our peoples to fully assume their role. We attach great significance to the conjunction of our efforts with those of the United Nations on the basis of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It is our sincere hope that draft resolution A/61/L.70 will enable us to scale up cooperation between our two organizations so that we can continue to jointly and more effectively tackle the myriad complex challenges to peace, security and sustainable development in Africa.

In conclusion, I wish to express our gratitude to all sponsoring nations and partners for their support. I also appeal to the States Members of the General Assembly to lend their support to the adoption of this draft resolution by consensus, as in previous years.

The President: In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.70, I now call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.70, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", I wish to place on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Under the terms of operative paragraph 7 of draft resolution A/61/L.70, the General Assembly would call for

> "the implementation of the decision on enhancing United Nations-African Union cooperation: framework for the ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, and in this regard, [request] the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Secretariat and to implement its mandate with respect to meeting the special needs of Africa".

It is the intention of the Secretary-General to address such capacity with respect to meeting the special needs of Africa in conjunction with the efforts to strengthen the risk-assessment and conflict-prevention capacities of the United Nations with a view to improving its early warning, mediation support and other preventive activities in Africa and around the world, as referred to in the statement made by the President of the Security Council of 28 August 2007 (S/PRST/2007/31).

In that connection, any resource requirements and programmatic implications that have yet to be elaborated would be submitted for consideration at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, in accordance with established procedures. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.70, there would be no programme budget implications at this time.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.70.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kitagawa (Japan): My delegation supports the reinforcement of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security. Furthermore, Japan has been extending assistance for the capacity-building of the AU.

With regard to the draft resolution that is before us, we can agree on many paragraphs contained in it. However, my delegation has reservations concerning the procedure followed by the sponsor countries for consultations on the draft resolution, which were not inclusive of all interested delegations, including my delegation.

In light of the absence of a statement on programme budget implications, my delegation takes it that there are no financial implications emanating from the adoption of draft resolution A/61/L.70.

Mr. Wallace (United States of America): The United States has been a staunch supporter of the African Union since its inception. On 22 December 2006, we became the first non-African nation to establish a diplomatic mission to the African Union. The United States continues to expand the range of support and collaborative activities we engage in with the African Union.

For that reason, it is with regret that we must disassociate ourselves from the draft resolution before us. While we agree with many paragraphs within the text, there are others for which insufficient time was allocated to discuss their meaning and implications. In the end, we were not given sufficient time to engage in consultations.

We trust that we will be able to thoughtfully engage in discussions on future resolutions on the same theme, and we remind our colleagues that consensus is possible only when all parties have enough time to air their views, debate their differences and achieve a common understanding and acceptance of the text of a draft resolution.

I wish you luck, Madame, and congratulate you on your time here at the United Nations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.70.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Austria, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Portugal, Seychelles, South Africa, the Sudan, Sweden and Zambia have become sponsors of the A/61/L.70.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.70?

Draft resolution A/61/L.70 was adopted (resolution 61/296).

The President: We now turn to sub-items (h), (l), (o) and (p) of agenda item 108.

I should like to recall for members that, pursuant to resolution 55/285 of 7 September 2001, the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", including its sub-items, should be biennialized and should appear on the agenda of the General Assembly at odd-number sessions after the fifty-seventh session.

Accordingly, sub-items (h), (l), (o) and (p) of agenda item 108 will be included in the provisional agenda of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-items (h), (l), (o) and (p) of agenda item 108 and of agenda item 108 as a whole.

Agenda item 45

The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order

Draft decision (A/61/L.71)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting on 13 September 2006, the Assembly decided to include agenda item 45 in the agenda of the sixty-first session. In connection with the item, the Assembly has before it a draft decision issued as document A/61/L.71.

The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/61/L.71. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft decision A/61/L.71?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 45?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 17 and 27

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the Assembly decided to include these items in the agenda of the sixty-first session.

Mr. Tashchian (Armenia): The Armenian delegation dissociates itself from the consensus on the decision to transfer agenda item 17, entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to inform the General Assembly that the Armenian delegation dissociates itself from the consensus on the decision to transfer agenda item 27, entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for peace, security and development", to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Armenia is confident that an agenda item dealing with four different conflicts cannot effectively or appropriately address the specific circumstances of each. In particular, Armenia is concerned that the unified concept behind this initiative could be detrimental to the ongoing negotiations on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict mediated by the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Thus, Armenia believes that any active steps undertaken within that agenda item could endanger the integrity of peace talks and thus compel Armenia to review the existing format of negotiations.

The President: In connection with these items, I should like to inform members that I have received a letter dated 4 September 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations requesting that consideration of these two items be deferred to the sixty-second session. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of these items and to include them in the draft agenda of its sixty-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda items 17 and 27.

Agenda items 12 and 19 to 25

The situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Question of Cyprus

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the Assembly decided to include item 12 in the agenda of the sixty-first session, in accordance with its decision 60/508 of 31 October 2005. Members will further recall that, at the same plenary meeting of 13 September 2006, the Assembly decided to include items 19 to 25 in the agenda of the sixty-first session, in accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of the annex to its resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004. In resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004 and decision 60/508 of 31 October 2005, the General Assembly decided that these items shall remain on the agenda for consideration upon notification by a Member State. Accordingly, these items have been included in the draft agenda of the sixty-second session.

Agenda item 119

Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the

Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-first session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 119.

Agenda item 137

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-first session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 137.

Agenda item 154

Follow-up to the recommendations on administrative management and internal oversight of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the General Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-first session.

Mr. Ballestero (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Throughout the world, the work of the United Nations is rightly acknowledged as being essential for the well-being of all peoples. It is with that goal in mind that we establish programmes and take action. Unfortunately, the image and the effectiveness of the United Nations have been affected by acts of corruption involving high-level staff members. The General Assembly ought to engage in full analysis and consideration of the consequences and implications of those acts.

Costa Rica is convinced that the only way in which we can avoid a repetition of such shameful and sad chapters as the scandal that we witnessed regarding the oil-for-food programme is through an in-depth analysis of all of the events. Certainly, based on the Volcker report, that analysis and the adoption of appropriate measures should be carried out within the General Assembly, since it is the principal legislative and deliberative organ of the Organization.

For that reason, Costa Rica would like us to retain this item on the agenda for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Allow me to conclude, Madam President, by thanking you and your team for your work at the head of our deliberations. My delegation recognizes your efforts in recent months, and we welcome the success achieved thanks to your leadership. We wish you all the best in the future — and we know that that future will be very satisfactory for you.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the sixty-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 154.

Agenda items remaining for consideration during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly

The President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, on which action has been taken at previous meetings, remained open for consideration during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly: items 13, 14, 32, 42, 44, 47, 52, 63 (b), 90, 100, 105 (a), 106 (h), 107, 112, 115 to 118, 120 to 136, 138 to 147, 149 and 151.

As members are aware, those items have been included in the provisional agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly with the exception of agenda item 120, entitled "Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency"; agenda item 126, entitled "United Nations pension system"; and agenda item 131, entitled

"Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of United Nations peacekeeping operations".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of those items at the present session?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have come to the end of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. It has been an honour and a privilege to work closely with all members. I have presided over a change of leadership in the Secretariat, and we have achieved notable successes in the General Assembly.

During this session, we have worked with determination and consistency, in an open and transparent manner. From my perspective, as the only woman President for a generation, and the first from the Arab world, I have come to see the United Nations as a global family, a family that is becoming ever more interdependent. At times, like all families, some members may have differences of opinion. That is natural in such a large and diverse group. We have many mutual interests, but it is only in the spirit of collective responsibility that we can take further steps to build greater trust and cooperation. We do that best when we all join together in common cause.

Despite the suspicion and mistrust that can at times prevail, members have demonstrated repeatedly that they can rise above their national interests in the service of the common good. It is clear to me, without any doubt, that when we stand united we are stronger; when we pursue our common goals with purpose and determination, the General Assembly makes a real difference and achieves successes sought by the entire world. To do that effectively, we must all accept both our shared responsibilities and our differences. The speed of change in the world around us is accelerating. Over the past year, the world has witnessed many dramatic events; civil wars and human rights abuses continue and have escalated.

Darfur is an ongoing humanitarian crisis; the threat of terrorism continues; natural disasters have increased in frequency and scale. Climate change is no longer a matter of debate; it has become a living reality for many. We truly face a development emergency if we are going to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on time.

Unless we act decisively, the planet will, by 2015, be suffering not less environmental degradation, but more. Feeling forgotten and with misplaced hope, millions of people will still be struggling on less than one dollar a day, and millions of children will still go hungry.

Yet we should not lose hope, for I believe that great hope arises from great hardship. More important, we have the means at our disposal to address and overcome this situation. That is why I made the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals the overarching theme of this session.

Each year the challenges that the multilateral system faces change, and new priorities emerge. The United Nations has at times been slow to react and rise to the occasion. Over the years, the tools we have at our disposal to tackle pressing issues have become less effective. That gap continues to grow. However, during this session of the General Assembly we have added to the list of accomplishments and helped to close that gap. Together we have strengthened the principal organs of the United Nations and have enhanced cooperation among them, as well as with regional organizations.

As stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations, the relationship between the General Assembly and the other principal organs must be founded on complementary, and not on competitiveness. We must therefore continue to develop those relationships in an open, transparent and cooperative manner, so as to strengthen the Organization and better accomplish our common goals.

This year we succeeded in forging good working relationships with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. On several occasions, I was invited to address those Councils during their debates. I trust that cooperation will continue in future sessions. In that regard, I would like to call for the implementation of the many resolutions of the General Assembly aimed at the promotion of such transparency and cooperation, in particular resolutions 58/126, 58/316 and 59/313. Going forward, we need to ensure the faithful implementation of those and other resolutions to further enhance partnership among the principal organs.

The revitalization of the General Assembly has been a priority during this session. In addition to adopting a new resolution on the matter, we have also renewed and broadened our engagement with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Another essential component necessary to strengthening the General Assembly is enhancement of the leadership role of the President of the Assembly. The role of the President is not only contingent upon the political and diplomatic skills of the incumbent; it is also based on the support that the Office of the President receives from the Secretariat. It is therefore critical to strengthen the Office of the President of the General Assembly in proportion to the growing responsibilities of the President.

The thematic debates I convened on subjects of development, financing and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), gender equality and women's empowerment, civilizations and the challenge for peace, and climate change have boosted our credibility in dealing with important issues on the global agenda. This has been the beginning of a renaissance for the General Assembly. The practice of convening thematic debates on the international priorities of the day has been an essential part of revitalizing the Assembly. I would therefore urge Member States to continue to support those initiatives, both politically and financially.

In announcing a $10 billion fund for the realization of the MDGs during the informal thematic debate on 27 November, the Islamic Development Bank, the newest member of our family, created an outstanding precedent that I hope will continue.

We can all be proud of adopting the landmark Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (resolution 61/106, annex), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (resolution 61/177, annex) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295, annex). Those are major steps forward in protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, as well as in reasserting the General Assembly's role as the chief deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations.

With the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, I am confident the Council will more effectively be able to promote global efforts to realize our international development goals. That is both a demanding responsibility and a tremendous opportunity that we must all wholeheartedly support.

We have all reaffirmed the need to reform the Security Council. The status quo is no longer acceptable. During the next session, I hope that the membership will, on the basis of the progress made during the sixty-first session on the positions and proposals of Member States, have the courage to begin discussions on meaningful intergovernmental negotiations. The world of the twenty-first century requires us to make the Security Council more representative, legitimate and effective. It is also incumbent upon us to enhance the Organization so that we can meet the needs of the poor.

The consultations on system-wide coherence have made some progress. They have demonstrated that we are less divided on substance than on the process itself. However, the impasse is not sustainable. We need to take concrete action, as any further delay will only prolong the suffering of the poorest among us.

On the issue of gender equality, the opportunity is now squarely before the Assembly. I hope the proper decisions will be taken.

On other issues, the Assembly has demonstrated its willingness to modernize the Organization to enable it to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. Members have done that by implementing comprehensive reforms to strengthen our role in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding; finalizing consultations recommending concrete options to strengthen international environmental governance; launching and reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; improving the effectiveness of the Peacebuilding Commission and raising new financing for the Peacebuilding Fund — and I would like to thank the Member States that have contributed to the Fund this year, and to express my confidence that the membership at large will continue to raise additional resources in the future sessions — giving the staff of the Organization an effective system to settle disputes and administer justice and strengthening its oversight by creating the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. By adopting a new scale of assessments and finalizing the Capital Master Plan, the Assembly

has put the Organization on the right path towards the future.

We have also successfully prepared the ground for important events that will take place during the sixty-session. Those include the high-level dialogue on inter-religious and intercultural understanding, the special commemorative session on children and the high-level dialogue on financing for development.

In this complex and globalized world, there is a larger question that looms over the United Nations. Are we satisfied that the decisions that we take will have a positive impact on the ground to ease the suffering of the many people who are in dire need of our support? In part, the answer is yes, but we need to do much more.

Of course, the United Nations is not a universal cure for the world's problems, though on many issues we have shown the road ahead. Still, we have not silenced our critics. We therefore must remember that it is not they for whom we work to serve, but rather the global public.

I can tell you first hand, from my experience on official visits this year, that this Organization continues — at times against all odds — to work for the common good, to help build a more democratic and prosperous world. While the United Nations can guide the way and point out the futility of military confrontations, ultimately it is the responsibility of sovereign Member States to work out solutions to crises, particularly in the Middle East and Darfur.

More than ever before, we need to focus on the underlying lack of dialogue between civilizations, cultures and nations that is at the core of many of today's problems. The General Assembly concluded during the substantive debate on civilizations that there is a lack of understanding and mutual respect between different parts of the global community. We must tackle these issues squarely, and in doing so, we have to move beyond the outdated mindset that separates the world into donors and recipients, North and South. We live in a new age, with new possibilities and new global players from the South.

Showing the way forward, Gandhi once said that "we must become the change we want to see in the world". Today, for the membership of the United Nations, this means we must match our words with deeds, our rhetoric with action. The promises that States Members of the United Nations have made deserve to be kept. Living up to our promises and achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is one of the greatest gifts that we could give to humanity, and our future prosperity and stability. We cannot allow our commitments to remain mere pledges; then they remain only words that symbolize our broken promises.

As we close this session, I would like to take this opportunity once again to extend my deepest appreciation to all the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly during the sixty-first session, and to thank the Chairpersons and the Bureaus of the Main Committees for all their hard work. I would like, in particular, to highlight as well the dedication of all those ambassadors who have chaired or facilitated important consultations, for without their dedicated and skilful efforts I would have nothing to report to the Assembly today.

I also want to extend my sincerest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to the principles and ideals of the United Nations, and for his support for the process of reforming this international Organization throughout the last eight months during which I have closely worked with him. I also thank Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro for her continued support of my work on implementing the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the area of gender equality.

I extend my thanks as well to the Secretariat of the United Nations, particularly the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

I also thank the many representatives of civil society and the NGO community, who are such great advocates for a strong United Nations.

Last but not least, I express my great appreciation of and thanks to each member of the team of the presidency of the General Assembly during the sixty-first session, who have represented the diversity of the United Nations through their dedication, hard work, skill and ability.

I wish to take the opportunity to welcome my successor, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, Mr. Srgjan Kerim. He is an accomplished academic, a leader in the private sector and an experienced diplomat who strongly believes in the United Nations. I have no doubt that the Assembly

will extend to him the same cooperation and friendship I have been so privileged to enjoy.

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I would like to thank you once again for all the work you have done over the last year. The challenge before you now is to continue to carry the torch of pluralism forward, to bring light where there is darkness, to bring hope where there is fear. Each of us here today has a responsibility; we are all accountable. Only the passage of time will judge whether we have been successful.

I can pass on this gavel knowing that I have given my all to serve the values and principles of the United Nations. For this honour, privilege and opportunity, I am deeply grateful to all of you. Thank you, farewell, and a Ramadan karim to all of you.

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the sixty-first regular session of the General Assembly. I invite the representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the sixty-first session

The President: I would like to invite to the podium the President-elect for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, so that I may hand over the gavel to him.

I declare closed the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.